

**LIBERSIDE EDUCATIONAL
MONOGRAPHS:
ART EDUCATION**

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Liberside Educational Monographs: Art Education by Henry Turner Bailey

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HENRY TURNER BAILEY

**LIBERSIDE EDUCATIONAL
MONOGRAPHS:
ART EDUCATION**

Riverside Educational Monographs

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ART EDUCATION

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EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

It is quite unnecessary to argue the worth of art education with those who have experienced beauty fully. To them it is an important value in life, one by which the refinement of human existence is measured. If a large generosity of spirit be coupled with esthetic appreciation, these persons would gladly give every child some training in the creation and appreciation of the quality of beauty. They believe in art training because they would add to the general enrichment of human life.

Unfortunately all are not possessed of an esthetic experience which convinces and a generous spirit which shares. An ignorance which disdains refinement, a poverty which dares not aspire to it, and a selfishness made respectable by aristocratic traditions, — all conspire to sustain the prevalent belief that art is a luxury. Since education is so very common, and art can be made so very cheap, it seems amazing that a people,

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frankly democratic in aspiration, should have done so little to make the art element common in life. It may be that our particular tradition and history impede us. Doubtless the Puritan tradition in American life has made us partly blind to esthetic values. To some of our people, many forms of art expression are mere frivolities. Play, athletics, dancing, and sociability are often regarded as wasteful and trivial. Again we are not far from our frontier life. America is young. A short while back, we were all pioneers wresting a livelihood from nature under conditions which called for complete attention to economic needs. Now that we are prosperous, that early dominance of economic values still persists to the continued subordination of esthetic considerations.

The result is seen in our generally accepted aristocratic conception of art. The rich feel that beauty is a perquisite of prosperity. The poor hardly dare to consider it as their right. The artists themselves, conscious of their best-paying clientage, despite their protestations to the contrary devote a disproportionate amount of their genius and energy to art forms especially adapted

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to the uses of the prosperous leisure class. Their interest in design applies itself to the composition of portraits far more than to the structure of cups and saucers. They have the defense that creative power must supply the demand of the appreciative. If such be the case, we must develop a democratic art through the bestowal of taste on the multitude. This is the task of art education in the schools.

In a restricted way we have been engaged in art education through the schools for some time. But the results have not been satisfactory. The whole program needs careful criticism and thorough reconstruction.

To begin with, the program for art education in the schools has been narrow and fragmentary, — a small amount of drawing and color work, a little singing, and some literature. And most of the things sung, read, and drawn have been unrelated to the common life. We did not make substantial progress in moral teaching as long as we were content to confine it to the Sunday School or other classroom period. Progress came when morality was treated as an aspect of the child's